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LETTER DATED 8 JULY 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a copy of the letter dated 6 July 1996 from His Excellency Mr. Eduard Shevardnadze, President of Georgia, addressed to you concerning the present situation in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The original of the letter will be forwarded to Your Excellency as soon as possible.

May I ask your kind assistance in circulating the text of the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dr. Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador Extraordinary
and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative

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Annex

Letter dated 6 July 1996 from the President of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am compelled once more to draw the attention of the members of the Security Council to the conflict in Abkhazia. Despite vigorous efforts on the part of the Secretary-General and the Security Council, the current situation seems likely to remain frozen for years. I have on more than one occasion addressed the Security Council on this issue. On 9 March 1994, I spoke at the session of the Council about the urgent situation threatening a member of the United Nations with forcible dismemberment and calling for a similarly urgent response.

Despite this, in the fourth year of the conflict, I still feel it is my responsibility to reaffirm my position. Given the character of current international relations, the changed world order, or even from the standpoint of mere humaneness, the rampant ethnic cleansing conducted by the Abkhaz separatists is impossible to tolerate. This has already claimed the lives of 3,834 Georgian civilians while almost 300,000 (of which 260,000 are ethnic Georgians) have been driven from their homes. As a result many of the forcibly vacated residences are now occupied by mercenary assassins and marauders from the North Caucasus and other neighbouring regions. Particularly enraging is the fact that the Abkhaz leadership continues to link the unconditional return of the displaced to political issues. Thus, universally recognized human rights continue to be trampled with impunity.

Apart from the shocking human tragedy, the protracted conflict remains a heavy burden on the shoulders of Georgia, seriously hampering its economic recovery and market reforms and exacerbating social tensions. Furthermore, the scale of the conflict jeopardizes peace and security in the entire Caucasus, affecting our immediate neighbours. On the one hand, similar criminal regimes are materially and morally nourished, and on the other, the vital transportation and communication functions of the region are blocked.

The Georgian State has nevertheless chosen and consistently implemented a policy of peaceful resolution of the conflict. Our first attempt was the 3 September 1992 agreement under which the territorial integrity of Georgia, cessation of hostilities and the restoration of normal functions of State structures was secured, among other things. The Abkhaz separatists treacherously violated that agreement as well as all others. This resulted in the fall of Gagra and Sukhumi, and eventually the expulsion of the Georgian population from Abkhazia.

Even under those grave circumstances, we never shut the door on negotiations - a fact reflected in the 13 resolutions adopted by the Security Council. In order to sustain the peace process, we, in fact, concluded several agreements containing concessions prompted by the gravity of the situation. More favourable conditions for the timely and fair resolution of the conflict were created by the adoption by Georgia of a federal State model. The new Constitution intentionally leaves certain details with regard to the federal

system unelaborated so that the eventual arrangement may incorporate Abkhaz interests within a federal State. I have publicly declared, and would like to reiterate, that Abkhazia as a federal subject will be granted wide-ranging rights compatible with international legal standards. These include broad autonomy, a parliament and a supreme court guaranteed by both an Abkhaz and the federal constitution, as well as such attributes of statehood as a flag, emblem and an anthem. Earlier this year, I outlined the above in a letter to the previous President of the Security Council.

Regrettably, the process of resolving this conflict is increasingly becoming a one-way street. The Secretary-General himself has admitted that the peace process in Abkhazia has met an impasse, since the people driven from their ancestral homes cannot remain indefinitely in their current situation. Meanwhile the separatist regime obstinately clings to the role of a victor. As they bask in their apparent immunity, the separatists ignore every document they themselves have signed as well as all appeals of the Security Council.

Allow me to remind the members of the Security Council that in the final document of the Organization for Cooperation and Security in Europe (OSCE) Summit held at Budapest, the activities of the separatists were appropriately named. The participating States "expressed their deep concern over 'ethnic cleansing', the massive expulsion of people, predominantly Georgian, from their living areas and the deaths of large numbers of innocent civilians". 1/ A clear and principled attitude was also expressed by the 1995 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Summit held at Almaty, which adopted a memorandum on full isolation of aggressive separatism as a phenomenon. The CIS Summit held in Moscow on 19 January 1996 supported the Georgian Government and declared a blockade (economic, political, military and other) against the separatist leadership.

There is every indication that the persuasion-based methods for resolving this conflict are all but exhausted. This does not at all mean that we must abandon the course of negotiations. Quite on the contrary, we must invigorate the process. The shortest route to settling the conflict, however, is to employ tactics of peaceful coercion, without which all calls for common sense and justice will no longer be of any use. It is our hope that the new resolution of the Security Council will be the final warning to the criminal regime to come to its senses and comply in short order with the international will. We also firmly believe that the Security Council will duly understand the efforts of a State Member of the United Nations to have all possible internationally accepted means applied in order to put an end to the attempt to undermine its territorial integrity.

(Signed) Eduard SHEVARDNADZE

Notes

1/ See A/49/800-S/1994/1435, annex, chap. II, p. 20.